

## **CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION REPORT**

### **November 2011**

This busy five day Convention was held October 31<sup>st</sup> - November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the new Vancouver Convention Center. This building is also a labour heritage center with interesting panels throughout the building highlighting labour history in British Columbia.

In attendance on behalf of Local 3260 were Marlene Hunt, Shawna Quinn for the first time and Karyn Noble for the second time. Stacy Delaney attended as Staff. Lori MacKay also attended as CUPE PEI President.

There were approximately 2 000 voting delegates at the convention representing over 615 000 CUPE members. This was CUPE's largest convention ever. 11 PEI locals sent 25 voting delegates and 1 alternate delegate, plus 1 delegate from CUPE PEI.

Our days were long with all day meetings, and then several more meetings and events in the evenings. On Sunday we attended a pre-convention meeting of the School Board Sector. It was very interesting to hear about what is going on in other areas in Canada in education. The Eastern Bloc held its caucus on Tuesday. Danny Cavanaugh was elected the Regional Vice President on the National Executive Board (NEB) for Nova Scotia. Daniel Léger was elected as the General Vice President representing the Maritime Atlantic region on the NEB. PEI's caucus was on Wednesday. Lori MacKay (from our local) was also elected as a Regional Vice President on the NEB. On Wednesday Karyn and Marlene attended the Women's Caucus. Karyn and Stacy attended the Facilitators luncheon on Thursday.

CUPE National President, Paul Moist spoke on Tuesday about how unstoppable a united CUPE is in reaching out to all Canadians as it fights the anti-union vision of the Harper Conservative Government. He said, "We will not be gripped with fear, we will fight inequalities, organize, and bargain, fighting smarter, thinking strategically and bargaining smarter to build a better world." It is all of you working together that has moved us forward, and that makes us not only the largest, but the greatest union in Canada! When we unite with other citizens who share our vision we are an unstoppable force for good!"

There was a touching tribute to the late Jack Layton, the former NDP leader. Jack's farewell message to Canadians was "Let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic...and we'll change the world." Delegates also remembered and celebrated Nancy Riche who died earlier in November at age 66 years. Nancy was a long time labour activist and was scheduled to attend as our Elections Officer. Both Jack and Nancy were incredible advocates, working towards social justice. Delegates pledged to continue their work striving for a better world.

Stephen Lewis was a keynote speaker. He spoke to the themes in CUPE's 2011 Strategic Directions document: 1. The assault on the P3's and the working class. 2. Fighting Back – the Occupy Vancouver Movement saying – "Unfettered greed is trashing our economies." He

talked about the power of the trade unions saying, “Keep fighting and one day the pendulum will swing.” 3. Reaching out to CUPE Members. 4. The quest for social justice extends to the world – not just for us – but extending to others outside Canada in solidarity. He reported that since 1995 CUPE has given ¼ million dollars to the Steven Lewis Foundation. He gave thanks saying, “CUPE generosity is astonishing in its strength and impetus! “

Maude Barlowe, National Chairperson, Council of Canadians was also a keynote speaker. She praised CUPE’S progressive stance on many issues, including the fight to stop the Comprehensive European Trade Agreement. (CETA) She said, “In our fight for true justice we find our best – our true selves!”

Delegates also adopted the new Clear Language Constitution. This will be printed and available to members in the near future. CUPE continues to be a leader in Literacy and we should be proud that our union will have its Constitution written in clear language! This means our national Constitution will be easier for CUPE members to understand. It makes CUPE more democratic.

Charles Fleury from Quebec was elected the new National Secretary Treasurer replacing retiring Claude Genereux. Danny Cavanaugh from Nova Scotia was in the running and ran a very positive and fair campaign. He gained great respect and credibility for the entire eastern block. He did very well in the voting, but unfortunately at the end of the day was not elected.

On Thursday, November 3rd the Grace Hartman Award was presented to Lynn Chasse. She is A Payroll Clerk for the Municipality of Kamloops, a Trustee and a member of her local’s Women’s Committee. Lynn dedicated her award “To the memory of all loved ones lost due to violence.”

There was so much to learn from our Sisters and Brothers in CUPE!

It was a truly memorable Convention for all of us and it was a pleasure to represent Local 3260!

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Hunt  
Shawna Quinn  
Karyn Noble.